

Unobtrusive Measurement and
Mass Attitude Surveys
Non-Elite Political Communication in Lebanon and Yemen
(Working Paper — Comments Welcome)

Daniel Corstange

Assistant Professor
Department of Government and Politics
University of Maryland, College Park

dcorstange@gvpt.umd.edu
<http://www.bsos.umd.edu/gvpt/corstange/>

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1 Why *Non-Elite* Communication

This paper studies political communication and, specifically, methods designed to study non-elites systematically. Communication is central to politics, whether the goal is persuasion, mobilization, the transmission of information where it is scarce, or the processing of information where it exists in overabundance. Although considerable emphasis is rightly placed on elites in these processes, many of the dynamics inherent to political communication describe interactions between elites and non-elites as well as interactions among non-elites themselves. Bringing non-elites into the study of political communication is, however, less easy to achieve in empirical terms than we might suppose *a priori*. To study non-elites systematically, we commonly choose to employ survey methods, and yet those methods are often unable to capture the very dynamics we wish to study: the content of non-elite discourse, peer-to-peer cues, and signals they may or may not send to elites. I review some of the difficulties of applying surveys to the study of non-elites in political communication, and suggest the reinvigoration of unobtrusive measurement techniques that can be utilized in tandem with standard survey instruments to enable us to study what we wish to study directly and systematically. I provide three empirical applications of the use of unobtrusive measures — one on discourse and political talk, one on peer-to-peer cue-taking, and one on signaling — while utilizing original data collected in Lebanon and Yemen.

2 Studying Political Communication Empirically

2.1 Fields of Study

2.1.1 Discourse and Political Talk

The study of discourse and political talk is based heavily in the normative political theory literature on deliberation, and despite the obvious centrality of discourse to the study of politics and the acts of politicking, empirical analysis of discourse and political is still relatively spare and tentative (Chambers 2003; Delli Carpini et al. 2004; Schmidt 2008; Steiner et al. 2004; Thompson 2008; Wedeen 1999, 2008). Deliberative theorists argue that deliberation, held under the right conditions, can change minds and transform opinions, broaden perspectives, promote understanding and tolerance between different social groups, and encourage public-spiritedness. Critics of such theories, meanwhile, suggest that the concepts contained

within the theory of deliberation are not well-specified or agreed upon by the theorists themselves, and that most of the normative claims posited in the name of deliberation have not been subjected to positive empirical analysis. Although some empirical work exists, it large studies, for practical data-gathering reasons, elite-level discourse despite the centrality of mass-level discourse in the theory, or else mass-level discourse via ethnographic methods that are difficult to generalize.

2.1.2 Cues and Heuristics

The study of cues and heuristics focuses on environments of imperfect information in which individuals seek to make decisions based not on an idealized version of rational calculation in the context of complete information, but rather via shortcuts and rules-of-thumb (Kahneman et al. 1982; Kuklinski and Hurley 1994; Lupia et al. 2000; Mondak 1993; Riggle et al. 1992; Smith and Squire 1990; Sniderman et al. 1991). In principle, cues-taking can occur in two qualitatively different environments. The first is one of information scarcity, in which very few points of data are available to help cue-takers to make informed decisions. The second is one of information abundance, in which processing and synthesizing the profusion of available data is far more costly to the cue-taker than the decision ultimately reached can justify. In either case, cue-taking makes use of available and easy-to-employ data to make a best guess that ideally approximates the decisions that individuals would reach were they to have access to complete information and were they to take the trouble to process it appropriately. Far from being irrational, cue-taking is a cost-effective way for individuals to make decisions that, although sometimes incorrect, are nonetheless sufficiently close to optimal that they obviate the need to pay information-gathering and processing costs. Despite the fact that cuing dynamics are implied to occur between non-elites — and are often declared to be operational by many anthropological studies and works on ethnic politics — the study of cue-taking has largely focused on the interaction between elites and masses, with elites acting as cue-givers and non-elites as cue-takers.

2.1.3 Signaling

Signaling models are among the most prominently-studied methods of strategic communication (Banks 1991; Calvert 1986; Riley 2001; Spence 1973, 1974a, 1974b, 2002). The basic version posits an environment of asymmetric information within which communication, informative or uninformative,

occurs. Senders, such as employees or constituents, have complete information over their types (high-quality versus low-quality worker, political supporter versus political opponent, etc.), whereas receivers, such as employers or politicians, do not observe the sender types and must attempt to infer them from what the senders themselves choose to communicate about their types. When sending signals are not costly, all types of individuals choose to send the most lucrative message, in which case there is no information content to the signal — receivers cannot infer type from it. If signal sending is sufficiently costly, however, receivers may infer senders’ types based on the fact that only individuals of a certain type can afford (or would otherwise choose) to send a given signal. Although senders and receivers may, in the abstract, be nearly anything from corporations to workers to nations, signaling logic commonly informs analysis of elite-mass communication, in which the elite receiver attempts to learn something about the non-elite sender, who in turn wishes to extract something of value from the receiver.

2.2 Frequently-Used Empirical Methods

To study discourse and strategic communication empirically, analysts employ a range of data collection methods, with qualitative methods predominating. The modal research strategy thus utilizes a case study or a comparison of a small number of cases, and often uses variants of ethnographic methods for data exploration and collection. These variants include participant observation, semi-structured interviews (sometimes with elites, sometimes with non-elites), focus groups, and a variety of other soak-and-poke efforts. These methods are strongest for theory development and hypothesis generation — the stage of apprehension before testing (Bates 2007) — and are particularly appropriate when construct validity has not yet been established and measurement validity is anticipated to present one of the central empirical quandaries facing the analyst.

Both of these validity concerns are relevant to the study of discourse and strategic communication. Theorists have not yet agreed on what actually constitutes discourse, for example, and exactly what constitutes a signal (beyond it being costly) has likewise not been settled. The absence of consensus definitions indicates the non-trivial difficulties associated with construct validity, and requires that we content ourselves, at least for the time being, with borrowing Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart’s famous definition of obscenity: “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. *But I know it when I see*

it” (emphasis added).¹ Similarly, measuring discourse and strategic communication is a non-trivial exercise that seems to privilege qualitative data collection *and interpretation*. What constitutes “good” versus “bad” discourse, what constitutes a viable cue whether consciously or unconsciously employed, and what constitutes an informative signal are not *a priori* obvious or easily predictable from abstract theory, and consequently many people have utilized qualitative methods to arrive at inductively identified indicators of these concepts.

The comparative weaknesses of these methods revolve around testing and generalization. Ethnographic and allied methods are generally not well-suited for rigorous empirical tests because the results are difficult to generalize. This is in part because the data collected are usually not structured in such a way as to permit actual testing of hypotheses, particularly in studies when the data were gathered for the purposes of hypothesis generation — thus invalidating their subsequent use to test the hypotheses they helped generate. Further, qualitative data collection processes are often difficult to replicate, partly because they are often extremely time- and labor-intensive, but fundamentally because *the ethnographers are themselves the instruments of measurement*. Hence, although qualitative methods may excel at generating imaginative, carefully considered, and most especially plausible accounts of political dynamics, they are comparable less well equipped to test and verify those accounts.

In contrast to the pervasive use of qualitative methods, quantitative methods are comparable rare and, in studying discourse, almost entirely absent (Steiner et al. 2004). The few studies of discourse using such methods generally employ a variant of content analysis, and focus, in large part for practical reasons, almost entirely on newspaper accounts or parliamentary debates — venues for elite speech that ignore mass discourse almost entirely. The few surveys that do engage in some form of discourse analysis study whether or not respondents engage in discourse (e.g., by discussing politics with friends or attending campaign rallies) rather than the content of that discourse. Studies of cue-taking — sometimes survey based, sometimes in the lab, and sometimes based on survey experiments — usually focus on non-elites passively taking cues from elites, and largely leave untouched dynamics of peer-to-peer cuing in which non-elites learn about politics and each other *from* each other. Studies of signaling, in turn, often rely on quantitative analysis of aggregate data that make indirect inferences based on very indirect indicators of signals — the classic case being education as

¹Jacobellis v. Ohio, 378 U.S. 184, 197 (1964).

a job-market signal.

Many of the dynamics implied by theories of discourse, cue-taking, and signaling share a central interest in the behavior of *non*-elites: how they talk with each other, what they learn not just from (or about) their leaders but also their peers, and what messages they choose to send or refrain from sending. Yet the empirical emphasis in the study of strategic communication tilts heavily toward elites. As described above, studies of discourse emphasize reliable written records from which to extract their data — privileging elite discourse because non-elites rarely leave well-preserved records of their discourse — or else utilize ethnographic methods on extremely small and concentrated populations to study non-elite discourse, the findings of which are difficult to generalize. Analysts of cue-taking, although considerably more likely to utilize experimental and survey methods to collect their data (Gaines et al. 2007; Kinder and Sanders 1990; Schuman and Bobo 1988; Sniderman and Grob 1996; White 2007), are nonetheless focused on elite-to-mass cuing dynamics, a monologue in which elites produce a cue and largely passive non-elites take (or ignore) that cue. Missing from this story is the peer-to-peer cue-giving and cue-taking that is described in much of the anthropological work and literature on ethnic politics and implied by many theoretical accounts on cuing, but which are difficult to study empirically. The study of signaling, in turn, focuses heavily on aggregate data from which analysts may draw indirect inferences about the signals that individuals may or may not send, yet rarely makes clear whether or not the putative senders of these signals are conscious of the fact that they are indeed engaging in the activities that analysts subsequently ascribe to them — that individuals are intentionally sending signals, or are (from their own viewpoint) engaging in qualitatively different activities that inadvertently produce signals. As such, we may wonder two things: should we not be studying *non*-elites? And should we not be studying them in a systematic fashion?

2.3 Can We (Should We) Use Surveys?

Surveys can support generalizable inferences largely due to the randomness and size of their samples, yet surveys cannot be treated cavalierly as a methodological panacea. Other aspects of survey research have stunted the utility of this data collection technique for studying discourse, peer-to-peer cues, and signaling. In particular, surveys, due to their design, cannot easily accommodate data collection that emphasizes the *content*, rather than the

act, of discourse.² Surveys purposefully make heavy use of closed-format questions with identical prompts for respondents, both to simplify the concepts under study and to make questions and answers mutually comprehensible between respondents and interviewers. Yet it is difficult to believe that this format approximates, much less replicates, either the unprompted discourse that respondents themselves use or the environments in which they use it, much less the cues and signals they send and receive, usually without giving them conscious thought. To the degree that we would accept a closed menu of, say, four or five sentence fragments as a rough approximation of discourse content, we must also acknowledge that the answers respondents choose are not given in their own words, but in those of the survey designer. Further, the survey interview itself occurs in a novel environment for respondents in which a stranger with a clipboard or laptop, who in the interest of science endeavors to betray neither approval nor disapproval of respondents' opinions, asks a series of formal questions that produce an artificial dialogue to which respondents are almost surely unaccustomed, and within which they are unlikely to behave and speak as they would were they with friends or acquaintances.

This, in turn, highlights another important limitation of survey research: surveys do not replicate the relevant audience to which respondents might direct their discourse, cues, and signals. Put another way, we are not actually interested in what people say *to a survey interviewer*, but rather in what they say *to each other*. Answers to survey questions do not have the same intended target as does the strategic communication we wish to study.³ Survey responses are not communications directed at, nor observable by, peers — in fact, we specifically assure respondents of their anonymity to encourage candor and relieve them of the concern that others will learn of their responses, thus negating many of the incentives they might otherwise face to adopt a particular form of discourse, give or take a particular cue, or send a particular signal. Survey questions, or at least the vast bulk of them which comprise the isolated interviewer-to-respondent interaction, are not

²This is likely one of the key contributing factors to why the few survey-based studies of discourse focus on the act of engaging in discourse (talking with friends, attending meetings) rather than on what people say when engaging in discourse.

³Further, even if some respondents were to say the same things to survey interviewers as they would to their peers, we would expect a systematic divergence between those utilizing “the same discourse” and those utilizing “differing discourse” (however defined) for a host of predictable as well as unanticipated reasons, such as holding sensitive political views, being poorly educated, having low political efficacy, being untrusting of strangers, and so on. Yet these are all items that we would also expect to predict the *content* of people's discourse, cues, and signals as well.

particularly well-suited for measuring the *content* or dynamics of strategic communication, whatever other strengths they might have.

Surveys, in other words, provide distinct methodological advantages that derive from their large, random samples and which support generalizable inferences, but the survey instrument as a data collection tool is notably less capable of capturing some of the key elements of strategic communication. Can we somehow square the circle by using surveys to study discourse, peer-to-peer cues, or signaling dynamics? I contend that we can, provided that we are willing to engage in creative, somewhat unorthodox measures. In particular, I suggest that we can marry unobtrusive measurement techniques to an otherwise standard survey, which permits us to draw defensible inferences about the statements people make to each other rather than to a survey interviewer.

3 Empirical Applications

This section provides three empirical applications of unobtrusive measurement utilized in tandem with mass attitude surveys to study discourse and strategic communication. These applications are summaries of other works-in-progress and thus necessarily leave out much that would be desirable in terms of theoretical and empirical detail. I nonetheless present the summaries as an entrée for readers into the measurement choices made to study the dynamics described in the theories. I am happy to share the dedicated works-in-progress with readers interested in the specific substantive components of each of these applications.

The data used for the empirical analyses that follow come from original face-to-face mass attitude surveys conducted in both Lebanon (fall 2005) and Yemen (spring 2007). In Lebanon, Beirut-based MADMA Co. drew the sample and administered the interviews. Respondents were drawn randomly from a stratified sample of Lebanese adults across all provinces, for a sample size of $N = 1000$. MADMA's sample frame is based on household demographics surveys conducted in the late-1990s by the Lebanese government on tens of thousands of households, for which the president of MADMA was a consultant. It is among the most reliable sample frames available in the absence of official censuses, which are too politically sensitive to conduct. In Yemen, meanwhile, the Sanaa-based Yemen Polling Center, the country's first licensed independent polling agency, drew the sample and administered the interviews, with a sample size of $N = 1440$. Given the greater difficulties of acquiring a reasonable sample frame, I utilized a combination of area and

cluster sampling techniques, drawing from half of the countrys provinces and stratifying within them.⁴

3.1 Religious and Sectarian Discourse in Lebanon

3.1.1 Theory: Dividing and Uniting With Religion

Sectarianism as a narrative is pervasive in Lebanese discourse, furnishing a series of idioms and tropes used to simplify and make sense of the country’s public life. The prominent and well-respected religious leader Muhammad Fadlallah (2001, 128) demonstrates several of these rhetorical devices and interrelated ideas when he describes Lebanese society as follows:

When we examine Lebanon, we see a society of advanced culture. . . But sectarian Lebanon, the Lebanon which nourishes its cultured people with sectarian sustenance — and here I of course do not mean religion, because sectarianism is a tribal condition while religion is a spiritual, intellectual one — roots the affiliation of each person within it in a given sect. . . It makes the cultured or religious person a sectarian animal who thinks instinctively and forgets all of what he has learned when sectarian feelings are aroused. Lebanon is highly cultured and advanced. . . yet this Lebanon exists in a state of effective political backwardness to a degree we might not have found among the primordial Arabs!

Fadlallah’s description combines numerous elements of the sectarian narrative, including pejoratives about primitiveness, a tribal metaphor, and a pointed distinction between religion and sectarianism. Each of these elements recurs repeatedly in Lebanese public discourse as the Lebanese grapple with their society’s pluralism and the sometimes competing, sometimes complementary claims to loyalty made on behalf of both exclusive and inclusive group memberships and identities.⁵

⁴The provinces sampled were Aden, Amran, Dhamar, Hadramawt, Hajja, Hodayda, Ibb, Marib, Sanaa (capital), and Taiz. Selection of particular provinces into the sample was semi-random, with their probability of inclusion based on their weighted population shares, subject to the constraint that both the capital (Sanaa) and at least two provinces from the former southern republic (in the sample, Aden and Hadramawt) be represented. Clustering and stratification were based on preliminary figures from the 2004 census down to the village or city neighborhood level, with individuals sampled via random-walk patterns.

⁵I am aware of the irony of cherry-picking a provocative statement by a “prominent and well-respected religious leader” to illustrate the Lebanese sectarian narrative given my criticism of the prevailing practice of studying discourse via anecdotes and self-authorized

Although the term “sectarianism” commonly conjures up journalistic images of intractable, age-old conflicts between religious zealots over fundamentally irreconcilable differences, such images are usually sensationalized if not fabricated and are based heavily on misrepresentations of the relatively few observable instances of sectarian conflict to the exclusion of the far more prevalent but far less reported instances of sectarian *peace* (cf. the analogous claim in Fearon and Laitin 1996). Further, such accounts conflate the religious and ethnic politics components of sectarianism by leaving ambiguous the role of religion in the conflict (cf. Gill 2001, Horowitz 1985, Keddie 1998, Makdisi 2008, and Melson and Wolpe 1970). More helpful to our understanding of the phenomenon, however, is that sectarianism sits at the *junction* of religious and ethnic politics, and contains elements of both.

In its capacity as ethnic politics — what others have sometimes called “communalism” — religion serves as the nominal marker of group boundaries and, as such, provides a means for people to construct differences when they are not really different (Joseph 2008). In its communal capacity, religion is a device for *exclusiveness*, usually associated with ethnocentrism and chauvinism, and the marker of distinction between in-groups and out-groups. In the context of group competition, the religiosity aspect of religion is in fact *deemphasized* as groups seek to mobilize both more and less pious members who share the same nominal marker, causing communal groups to stress shared cultural traditions that are conflated with religion in place of religious beliefs and obligations that would effectively exclude large segments of the nominal communal group (Keddie 1998). Communal sectarianism, in other words, is a divisive force.

Yet religion, in addition to providing the nominal marker of group difference, also serves as a set of behavioral prescriptions as well as ethical and moral ideals. Further, these core ideals are largely *shared* across doctrinal traditions despite the specific details that distinguish them. Ecumenical religiosity, in other words, is a potentially *unifying* force that provides the basis for agreement and cooperation between members of nominally different religious communities. Religion, in its role as religiosity, thus provides a set of shared ideals enabling people to imagine a larger, more inclusive community beyond the sect and, in the context of religiously plural societies whose

key thinkers. The goal of this quotation is merely to familiarize readers with a few of the recurring components of this narrative. Those wishing a more expansive immersion into this discourse should consult the columnists of Lebanon’s three leading daily newspapers, *al-Nahar*, *al-Safir*, and *al-Akhbar*, along with the compilations of press interviews and newspaper columns contained in, e.g., Charbel (2008), Fadlallah (2001, 2007), Hoss (2003), Muhsin (2000), Sadr (2000a, 2000b), Samaha (2007), Sulayman (1998), and Tueni (2006).

members purportedly lack a strong sense of national identity, a substitute for the secular religion of nationalism.

Separating out these two different components of sectarianism enables us to examine religiosity and communalism as two separable and potentially countervailing influences on people's attitudes, preferences, and behaviors. In particular, there are stark differences between the positively-valenced religious component of sectarianism and the negatively-valenced ethnic component. There is also a corresponding claim that inclusive, ecumenical religiosity, were it only applied, could serve as a tool to moderate the negative social and political repercussions of exclusive, chauvinistic sectarianism. Such a claim shows up repeatedly in direct and indirect form throughout Lebanese discourse, as when the longtime publisher of Lebanon's leading daily newspaper *al-Nahar* argues that "nothing will make sectarianism, and the heretical holy war fought in its name, vanish more than the deepening of true religious belief. . . in Islam as in Christianity, and strengthening the religious virtues found in both creeds."⁶

There is a considerable body of evidence to be found in elite discourse that is consistent with the story described above. Yet there are two significant problems with relying on this form of evidence. First, it would be a non-trivial exercise to collect and analyze such evidence in a systematic fashion given that we have no agreed-upon definition of the universe of elites or discursive events, nor do we have a clear mechanism to sample those elites or discursive events for analysis.⁷ Second, even supposing we could resolve our universe and sampling difficulties, we would still be in an untenable position to infer what *regular people* think or say about sectarianism. In Lebanon perhaps even more so than elsewhere in the world, political representatives are not actually representative of the people for whom they purport to speak, and instead are, for the most part, richer, better educated, more articulate, and more politically engaged than the general populace. Regular people are largely silent in the environments where elites are vocal, and although in such venues elites may claim to speak *for* them, they do not speak *like*

⁶Ghassan Tuani, "The crisis ends when we elect a prophetic president" («تتتهي الأزمة» *al-Nahar*, 2 April 2007. عندما ننتخب رئيساً رسولياً»)

⁷I do not mean to imply that systematic study of elite discourse is impossible, but rather that it requires non-obvious and non-trivial decisions on 1. how to define who counts as an elite (e.g., are newspaper columnists "less elite" than members of parliament who are less elite than ministers, and are they qualitatively distinct from religious leaders?); 2. what counts as elite discourse (e.g., are sermons intelligently comparable to speeches in parliament or academic treatises?); and 3. how to sample from that discourse systematically (e.g., are sermons or stump speeches preserved as reliably and made as easily accessible as parliamentary debates or newspaper columns?).

them. How, then, can we hope to study mass discourse in a systematic way?

3.1.2 Measurement: Messages Targeting Peers as Audience

As discussed previously, one of the realities of studying discourse is that it is a wordy enterprise and, given the complexities of human languages, usually demands a great deal of labor-intensive interpretation to understand its ramifications. This, in turn, puts measurement validity at the forefront of the research endeavor and highlights the non-trivial efforts required to operationalize the concepts in question. Partially in recognition of these factors, many scholars choose to study discourse at the mass level via ethnographic and other qualitatively-oriented methods — usually through some combination of participant observation, lengthy semi-structured interviews, soaking-and-poking, and so on. Although ideal for inductive theory development and hypothesis generation, such methods are not well-suited for theory or hypothesis testing because the empirical data by themselves do not provide the necessary leverage to make defensible generalizations without invoking auxiliary assumptions or data. Hence, survey methods can, at least in principle, provide complementary data because surveys are comparably strong for testing and generalization purposes.

Yet, as also discussed previously, there are some aspects of survey methodology that make it problematic for studying the *content* rather than the act of discourse. Part of the difficulty is the fact that content is tied to the intended target of the discourse. Put another way, studying discourse requires that we get the audience right. In substantive terms, we are not interested in what people say to a survey interviewer, but rather what people say to each other. Survey responses, in turn, are neither directed at, nor observable by, peers, and so cannot approximate discourse. This implies that, whatever we choose to utilize as a measure of discourse cannot, by definition, be something measured in the survey interview itself. How, then, can we use a survey to study mass discourse if we cannot use survey *questions* to study mass discourse?

To square this circle, I marry unobtrusive measurement techniques to an otherwise standard survey instrument. In doing so, I take advantage of the Lebanese practice of *publicly* communicating their religious and political affiliations by displaying religious icons and political symbols outside their homes. In addition to discussions in cafes, workshops, conferences, and clubs, the Lebanese also engage in public discourse with one another through iconography. As one travels around the different quarters of Beirut or among the mountain villages, one is struck by, first, the variety of reli-

gious images displayed above doors and in windows such as Quranic verses, the hand of Fatima, crucifixes, and figurines of the Virgin Mary. Second, one is subject to a bewildering array of party flags and militia symbols, as well as posters and photographs of political leaders. To illustrate, Figure 1 reproduces some examples of these items. One of the distinguishing features of these images — and particularly important for studying discourse — is that they are *publicly* displayed: the intended audience is comprised of other Lebanese rather than a survey interviewer. Publicity, the very characteristic of the iconography that might make them questionable indicators of latent attitudes (because the posters know they have an audience), makes these icons and symbols exceptional indicators of *discourse*, because they are intended as public statements and means to communicate ideas with peers.

But what statements do the Lebanese make when they display these icons and symbols? I suggest that the display of religious iconography is a statement of religiosity and personal piety that may or may not constitute a *political* message. The display of political symbols, in turn, is a statement of political affiliation which, in the Lebanese context of mono-sectarian parties and movements, is frequently accompanied by ethnocentrism and intransigence — i.e., a statement of communal sectarianism. Displaying both religious and political iconography, in turn, is a statement that shared religious ideals can and should be used to guide political affairs, which is a message consistent with the claim that inclusive, ecumenical religiosity can temper the excesses of exclusive, chauvinistic sectarianism. Although plausible, these claims require some form of empirical validation, to which I now turn.

3.1.3 Empirics: Religious Icons and Political Symbols

In utilizing publicly displayed religious icons and political symbols as indicators of discourse, we may, in principle, analyze them as both dependent and independent variables. In the former sense, we may investigate the sources of variation in the display of this iconography, which helps to substantiate that the images in fact transmit the content of the messages I claim they send. In the latter sense, we may investigate whether or not the iconography, as validated indicators of types of discourse, helps to explain variation in other, allied concepts. In particular, we may suppose that discourses on inclusive and exclusive definitions of the polity should have observable implications in preferences over governing institutions, and if so, we should expect different discourse types to predict different institutional preferences in a systematic



Figure 1: Religious Icons and Political posters

way. I begin here by validating the iconography by analyzing them as dependent variables, and subsequently leverage them as independent variables to explain variation in support for different autocratic institutions.

Identifying useful indicators of personal religiosity in a multireligious society is a non-trivial exercise due to comparability concerns. Although some scholars have attempted to operationalize religiosity via measurement of personal ritual practice such as frequency of attendance at religious services or frequency of prayers (Tessler ?, 2003; Jamal 2007), using analogous measures in Lebanon is complicated both by the diversity of doctrinal traditions and the sensitivity of attendant practices. Instead, I use two relatively innocuous measures: *Conservative*, a thermometer-style measure of religious conservatism,⁸ and *Comfort*, a dummy indicator for respondents who indicate that they receive “very much” comfort from religion.⁹ Both measures should, in principle, predict the display of religious icons, yet, given the noted ambivalence of religion to politics, should *not* predict the display of political symbols.

Different items, in turn, should predict the choice to display political symbols. For these to be valid public statements of political affiliation, they must reflect respondents’ actual sentiments to some degree. To capture this idea, I utilize the indicator variable *Party Supporter*, derived from an open-response question in which respondents are invited to cite the political group to which they feel closest politically, with individuals citing a particular party or party leader taking the indicator.¹⁰ Yet I have also suggested that these symbols should also communicate ethnocentrism. As an indicator of sectarianism in the ethnocentric or chauvinistic sense, I employ the indicator variable *Trust Sect*, a comparison of the degree of interpersonal trust individuals have in their Lebanese peers in general, and members of their sect in particular, with those indicating relatively greater degrees of trust in cosectarians receiving the indicator.¹¹

⁸The question reads, “on a scale from 1 to 100, where 1 is very conservative and 100 is very liberal, where would you put yourself on religious matters?” For convenience in the data analysis, I rescale responses on a 0–1 continuum with higher numbers indicating more conservative.

⁹The question reads, “do you find that you get comfort and strength from religion?” which is measured on a four-point scale. I dichotomize the variable in the data analysis because the data skews heavily toward the more religious end of the scale, yet still provides exploitable variation between the top point on the scale and all those below the top.

¹⁰The question reads, “Please tell me what political party, political movement or gathering, or political leader you feel *closest to* politically.” Respondents were post-coded according to whether they cited a political party or movement, a prominent leader in such a movement, non-party organizations, or no one in particular.

¹¹This dummy variable is a compound of two related survey questions, the former

Table 1 presents the results of two binomial logit models designed to predict respondent decisions to display either a religious icon or a political symbol, utilizing the same basic set of control variables and the key explanators described above.¹² These data supply consistent evidence with the expectations I laid out previously. In particular, both measures of religiosity, *Conservative* and *Comfort*, positively predict the display of religious icons. In other words, people who are more religiously conservative and who find great comfort in religion are more likely to say so publicly by displaying religious imagery. Further, the two explanators chosen to explain the display of political symbols, *Party Supporter* and *Trust Sect*, both positively predict the display of those symbols. Hence, people with self-identified political affiliations, and ethnocentric individuals who trust cosectarians more than other Lebanese, are more likely to demonstrate these views publicly by posting political messages.

Table 1 does not tell the whole story, however, and two major points of interest remain. First, we may wonder if the religiosity indicators predict political symbols, and the sectarianism indicators predict religious icons, which if true would suggest that the messages the Lebanese send with these displays is not as neat as the stylized version I am claiming. Second, people may in principle send *four* types of messages: posting nothing at all (the null message), posting religious icons but not political symbols, posting political symbols but not religious icons, or posting *both* religious icons and political symbols. The latter message is particularly noteworthy insofar as it most closely approximates the argument I discussed earlier that religiosity

reading, “Let me ask you about how trustworthy you feel people are in general. Which of these two statements do you agree with most?” and the latter reading, “How about just members of your own sect? Which of these two statements do you agree with most?” Respondents receive analogous response choices and are asked to indicate which of the two they agree with more, and whether they agree strongly or just somewhat: 1. “You can never be too careful with people in (our country) these days,” and 2. “Most people in (our country) are generally trustworthy.”

¹²Two control variables that are not immediately self-explanatory deserve a small note here. *Electricity* is the number of hours per day the electricity is off in the respondent’s home (square-root transformation), which I employ as a basic socioeconomic status control given that well over 10 percent of the sample (and nearly 30 percent of Shiites) refused to answer more standard income questions. *Diversity* is the sectarian fractionalization index of the respondent’s district, and constructed in the same manner as the various cross-national ethnolinguistic fractionalization indices from 2005 electoral district data on voter registration published by *al-Safir* in the spring of 2005. I include this indicator to capture the possibility that social pressure may prompt individuals to post (or not post) religious icons or political symbols above and beyond what they would choose to do in the abstract — i.e., I include this indicator to study messages and discourse net of social pressure.

may temper the ethnocentric, chauvinistic aspects of political sectarianism. Table 2 addresses both of these questions by presenting results from a multinomial logit model designed to predict which of these messages the Lebanese send (compared against the null message of no icons or symbols displayed). There are three major points of interest in these results. First, the religiosity indicators predict *only* those messages with a religious icon component (columns one and three) and *not* the decision to display only a political symbol. Second, political affiliation predicts only those messages with a political symbol component (columns two and three) and not the decision to display only a religious icon. Third, and of the greatest interest here, *Trust Sect*, the indicator of sectarian chauvinism, predicts only the decision to display a political symbol by itself, and *not* the decision to display either a religious icon alone or both a religious icon and political symbol at the same time. This result in particular provides evidence consistent with the argument that ecumenical religiosity, with its emphasis on shared religious ideals, can moderate the chauvinistic elements of exclusive, communally-oriented sectarianism.

	Religious Icons		Political Symbols	
	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>
Intercept	-4.072	0.500***	-3.224	0.478***
Shia	-0.289	0.257	1.155	0.260***
Sunni	-0.551	0.254*	1.331	0.253***
Diversity	-0.745	0.421	0.927	0.431*
Female	0.026	0.176	-0.400	0.179
Education	0.789	0.404	0.921	0.419*
Rural	-0.641	0.198**	-0.197	0.200
Electricity	0.140	0.083	-0.300	0.800***
Comfort	2.380	0.414***		
Conservative	3.500	0.380***		
Party Supporter			1.316	0.336***
Trust Sect			0.575	0.187**
ln(<i>L</i>)	-469.09		-465.73	
<i>n</i>	876		909	

Table 1: Displaying Religious Icons and Political Symbols

	Religious Icons Only		Political Symbols Only		Both Icons and Symbols	
	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>
	Intercept	-2.734	0.614***	-4.005	1.001***	-11.470
Shia	-0.323	0.290	0.501	0.377	0.103	0.481
Sunni	-0.988	0.308**	0.185	0.418	0.330	0.433
Diversity	-1.090	0.480*	1.237	0.628	0.049	0.753
Female	-0.128	0.210	-0.468	0.296	0.088	0.274
Education	-0.367	0.493	-0.472	0.673	2.660	0.638***
Rural	-0.419	0.228	0.578	0.362	-0.705	0.318*
Electricity	0.265	0.114*	-0.303	0.142*	-0.111	0.120
Comfort	1.325	0.437**	0.179	0.541	5.520	0.967***
Conservative	2.333	0.454***	-0.065	0.612	5.642	0.648***
Party Supporter	0.109	0.303	1.947	0.745*	1.308	0.441**
Trust Sect	0.179	0.236	1.089	0.267***	0.290	0.310
ln(<i>L</i>)			-788.25			

Table 2: Predicting Religious Icons and/or Political Symbols

So far, these data provide evidence consistent with the arguments I laid out previously about the discourse in which the Lebanese engage about religiosity and sectarianism. Although interesting in abstract terms, the display of icons and symbols is not especially monumental in and of itself, and we might also wish to know how we may leverage this discourse to learn about other, more substantive issues about which we might care. In particular, we might wonder if we can leverage this iconography to understand the content of discourse on, and underlying preferences for, the different institutional choices the Lebanese face. Notably, valorization (or not) of pluralism in the context of institutional choice is one constituent ramification with substantive bite of the focus on inclusive, ecumenical religiosity versus exclusive, ethnocentric sectarianism.

Put a different way, we can relate Lebanese discourse back to larger questions about preferences over governing institutions and ask whether or not religiosity moderates sectarian tendencies to authoritarianism, which in constitutive terms is less plural in orientation than democracy (whatever the latter’s imperfections on this metric).¹³ Respondents assess four types of autocratic institutions on a four-point scale according to how appropriate they would be for Lebanon:

- Having a strong head of government who does not have to bother with parliament and elections (*Strong Leader*),
- Having experts, not government, make decisions according to what they think is best for the country (*Experts Rule*),
- Having religious leaders make decisions for the country according to religious law (*Clerics Rule*),
- Having the army rule (*Army Rules*).

Unsurprisingly, the modal response for each of the four options is the lowest on the scale, yet there remains substantial variation on each question. We may thus wonder what can explain this variation and, particularly, if we can

¹³I emphasize autocratic institutions here rather than democracy itself due in part to applied considerations: nearly all respondents supply overwhelmingly positive assessments of democracy, which provides very little variation to explain. I say “very little” rather than “none” because there is a small amount concentrated within the Shia community which I describe in other work. I leave this latter analysis out of the present paper to avoid a lengthy tangent, although the findings harmonize nicely with the results presented here.

leverage the religious icons and political symbols (and the types of discourse they represent) to provide this explanation.

Figure 2 presents nonparametric scatterplots of responses to the four autocratic options by whether or not respondents display religious icons and/or political symbols. Responses are denoted in the plots as “very bad” (B in green), “somewhat bad” (b in greenish-blue), “somewhat good” (g in magenta), and “very good” (G in red). What is most visually striking in all four plots is the heavy emphasis on anti-autocratic assessments — and relative dearth of pro-autocratic assessments — in the upper-right quadrant of the plot corresponding to respondents who display both religious icons and political symbols. Determining whether or not this visual inference — that anti-autocratic, pro-pluralist preferences concentrate among this latter set of individuals — receives systematic corroboration is the clear next step, particularly when considering *Clerics Rule*, which appears more uncertain than the other options.

Figure 3 presents results from four ordinal logit models designed to predict respondent assessments of the four autocratic governing options. In addition to a set of basic demographic controls, they include as the key explanators indicators for displaying religious icons (R), political symbols (P), and an interaction between the two ($R \times P$) to capture the contingent effects of religiosity and sectarianism. These results provide strong corroboration of the evidence presented visually in Figure 2 and substantiate the claims made previously about religion’s role in moderating sectarianism. In particular, the interaction term $R \times P$ is *always* negative and statistically significant. Substantively, this estimated effect is consistent with the anti-authoritarian, pro-pluralist message articulated by those Lebanese who display both religious icons and political symbols — a statement that ecumenical religiosity and the shared ideals contained therein can and should guide Lebanese politics and institutions.

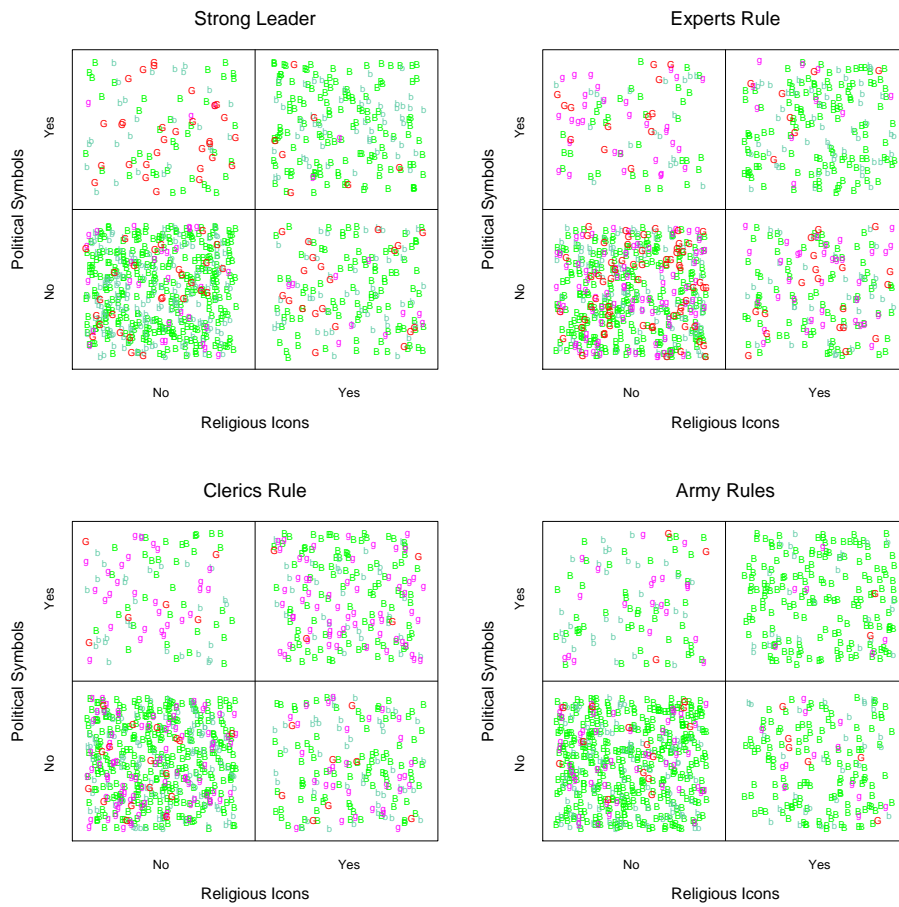


Figure 2: Icons and Symbols Scatterplots (Green: Bad, Red: Good)

	Strong Leader		Experts Rule		Clerics Rule		Army Rules	
	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>
Shia	-0.331	0.184	-0.584	0.180**	-0.080	0.185	0.376	0.209
Sunni	-0.396	0.184*	0.236	0.181	0.336	0.181	0.355	0.209
Female	-0.513	0.155**	-0.480	0.153**	-0.232	0.154	-0.123	0.176
Education	0.238	0.164***	-1.571	0.332***	-1.745	0.347***	-1.461	0.385***
Rural	-1.341	0.346	0.048	0.161	-0.348	0.161*	-0.038	0.188
Electricity	-0.417	0.070***	-0.594	0.070***	-0.648	0.073***	-0.638	0.080***
R	0.317	0.180	0.224	0.178	0.371	0.180*	-0.076	0.206
P	0.997	0.236***	0.654	0.223**	0.832	0.225***	0.717	0.230**
R × P	-1.917	0.338***	-2.282	0.336***	-1.378	0.325***	-2.237	0.382***
<i>A</i> ₁	-1.571	0.278***	-2.635	0.279***	-2.382	0.285***	-1.377	0.313***
<i>A</i> ₂	0.111	0.058	-1.472	0.068***	-1.152	0.066***	0.083	0.073
<i>A</i> ₃	0.592	0.151***	-0.014	0.075	1.412	0.073***	1.852	0.110***
ln(<i>L</i>)	-877.86		-952.79		-878.98		-709.76	
<i>n</i>	909		893		903		912	

Table 3: Predicting Views on Autocracy

Several conclusions follow from this empirical application. First, despite the omnipresent and non-trivial measurement validity concerns, this analysis demonstrates that it *is* possible to study mass discourse in a systematic and generalizable way by using mass attitude surveys in tandem in unobtrusive measurement techniques. Second, by using answers to standard questions from the survey interview itself, we can verify that the observables we choose as indicators of discourse do in fact transmit the information and messages we claim them to contain. Third and finally, we need not stop there and content ourselves with studying discourse for its own sake, but rather can examine other ramifications of that discourse about which we have substantive interest, such as institutional preferences.

3.2 Tribal Cues in Yemen

3.2.1 Theory: Tribal Law and Tribal Governance

Tribes and tribalism are pervasive components of Yemeni public life. With a long history of weak government institutions and minimal state extension into the country's hinterlands, Yemenis have employed alternative means of conflict regulation and resolution that rely heavily on tribes, tribal deterrence, and the application of tribal law. Despite the nominal adoption of formal judicial and legislative institutions that largely mirror on paper their counterparts in other countries, application of formal, written principles differs considerably from the letter of the law. Instead, tribalism pervades Yemeni formal institutions and the governing regime that operates them, to the degree that full membership in the polity effectively depends on participation in the tribal system, with non-tribesmen frequently complaining that they are practically second-class citizens.

Conventional wisdom suggests that tribes are bad for development and make states weak by resisting state efforts to spread law and order into tribal territories and obstruct development planning. Yet we might also make the inverse claim that it is underdevelopment that causes tribes, rather than the other way around. Tribes serve as second-best alternatives to an absent or weak state in their capacity to supply a basic degree of security and predictability via the semi-private provision of tribal law, which serves as an imperfect substitute for the rule of law, an undersupplied public good (Bates 1983, 2001; Bates et al. 2002; Corstange 2009; Fearon and Laitin 1996; Rodrik 2008).

In interacting with each other, Yemenis frequently wish to condition their behavior on each other's characteristics in order to infer likely preferences

and reactions. This is particularly so in the context of interactions that may lead to disputes, and necessitate some mechanisms of dispute resolution. Yemenis may wish to infer, in particular, if their counterparts would acquiesce to the use of formal state institutions or would prefer (even demand) to employ customary tribal law. Furthermore, given the endemic corruption in state courts and the fact that tribal law rulings are enforced by the tribes themselves, Yemenis would also wish to know whether their potential protagonists have connections to officials or belong to a strong tribe, either of which might result in an inequitable resolution to any dispute that should arise.

Many day-to-day interactions between Yemenis occur among people who know each other reasonably well — members of extended families, inhabitants of the same village or neighborhood, and so on — and who expect to interact with each other frequently in the future, thus implicitly invoking the shadow of the future to regulate and contain disputes. Yet many other interactions occur between strangers, whether in the marketplace, when traveling, or in other public spaces outside the familiar confines of the village or neighborhood. In such circumstances, Yemenis know nothing of each other beyond what they can infer. Rather than go to considerable effort to get to know each other — which may be neither necessary nor desirable for the transaction being contemplated — Yemenis may instead assess their interlocutors according to various cues and heuristics that enable them to predict background details and likely preferences over dispute resolution.

3.2.2 Measurement: Cuing Tribal Affiliations

What can Yemenis learn about each other from superficial observation? Insofar as they can employ visual (and audible) cues to reach educated guesses about the tribal affiliations and predispositions of each other, they can condition their behavior in appropriate ways to minimize the potential for conflict and to guess their most likely recourse for dispute resolution should a conflict develop. The cues that Yemenis employ, in other words, constitute a peer-to-peer interaction, which distinguishes them from the elites-to-masses cues commonly studied in political science in which mass constituents employ information contained in the cues produced by elites. Although acknowledgment of such peer-to-peer cues is common in anthropology and within studies of ethnic politics (not to mention the social psychological literature on cuing), cuing dynamics are more frequently asserted than demonstrated. When applied scholars provide empirics, in turn, it is largely through anecdotal *illustrations* rather than systematic *demonstrations*. Hence, as before,

survey methods can, at least in principle, provide complementary data that enable defensible, generalizable inferences about cuing dynamics.

Yet how to employ surveys to study peer-to-peer cuing dynamics is not immediately obvious. The quandary is analogous to the problem identified previously in the study of discourse: the audience is wrong. In principle, cuing occurs in information-scarce interactions. People employ cues precisely *because* they do not have access to the information we collect in the survey interviews. Consequently, answers to questions posed in the interviews themselves cannot serve as empirical indicators of cues for the simple reason that they are unobservable to the peers who would be utilizing them. How, then, can we utilize surveys to study peer-to-peer cuing dynamics?

As with the study of mass discourse, I utilize unobtrusive measurement techniques in tandem with the standard survey instrument. In the Yemeni context, I make use of a well-understood visual cue associated with tribalism: the tribal dagger. The iconic, curved-bladed tribal dagger, worn conspicuously in decorative sheaths attached to special-purpose belts on the front of the person, is pervasive among Yemeni tribesmen. Figure 3 reproduces examples, both of which feature the president, himself a tribesman, dressed in full tribal regalia and appropriating the trope of the wise and respected tribal shaykh. Although formerly enforced social norms restricting who may wear the tribal dagger (and where on their person they may wear it) have relaxed since the revolution to the point that non-tribesmen now sometimes wear the dagger as well, it nonetheless continues to be associated with tribalism and all the ramifications thereof. In particular, the tribal dagger cues allows Yemenis, quickly, superficially, and discretely, to infer each other's views on tribal law and their self-assessed standing in the community as full, influential members of the polity. These inferences, in turn, permit Yemenis to condition their behavior in deciding how (or whether) to interact or transact with potential interlocutors.

These claims are, in principle, subject to empirical validation. Further, because we have information that Yemenis utilizing the dagger cue lack — specifically, responses to survey questions designed to measure precisely these issues of tribal law and political influence — we are well positioned to assess whether or not Yemenis are justified in utilizing the tribal dagger as a viable cue from which to predict a wearer's tribal commitments and views on the polity. It is to this empirical validation that I now turn.



Figure 3: Tribal Dagger

3.2.3 Empirics: Tribal Law and Political Influence

As before when studying discourse in Lebanon, we may, in principle examine the decision to wear a tribal dagger as both a dependent and independent variable. In the former sense, we may attempt to validate claims about what induces individuals to wear the dagger and assess the degree to which peers' educated guesses of the wearer's tribal inclinations are well-substantiated. In the latter sense, we may use the daggers as a way to predict variation in preferences and attitudes of interest, much in the same way (albeit more rigorously) that peers might use the dagger as a shorthand cue from which to predict the wearer's preferences on which to condition their own behavior.

Tribalism is latent and unobservable unless the individual in question somehow reveals it to observers, either intentionally or incidentally. Tribal daggers were, in the pre-revolutionary era, almost entirely the reserve of tribesmen, but this social norm has relaxed somewhat since the revolution such that some non-tribesmen now choose to wear the dagger as well. In this environment, we may wonder if observers can still infer anything from the choice to wear a dagger about the wearer's background, his tribal membership, or the degree to which he values that tribal membership. To assess this, I utilize two related questions from the survey instrument that ask respondents to indicate, first, whether or not they are tribesmen regardless of

the importance of that affiliation, and second, the importance they attach to that affiliation if they are indeed members.¹⁴

Table 4 reports results from a binomial logit model that attempts to predict (male) respondents' decisions to wear a tribal dagger according to a set of basic controls, their sectarian affiliations (with Zaydi Shiites traditionally most tribally-oriented), whether or not they are tribesmen, and the importance they attach to their tribal memberships.¹⁵ Unsurprisingly, Zaydis are systematically more likely to wear the dagger, and Yemenis who hope to infer their peers' sectarian affiliations from their daggers appear to be on solid ground in doing so. More interesting are the inferences Yemenis may hope to draw about the tribal inclinations of dagger wearers. The first point to acknowledge is that tribal membership alone does *not* predict the dagger: only sufficient valorization of tribal membership does. From the viewpoint of the information Yemenis may wish to infer from the dagger, however, this may be a distinction without merit, as a non-tribesman and a tribesman in name only but not inclination may share very similar preferences and attitudes. Hence, Yemenis hoping to guess whether they are interacting with a *tribal* tribesman or not appear able to make a valid inference on the basis of the dagger cue.

¹⁴The first question reads, "Regardless of how important it is to you, do you consider yourself affiliated with a tribe?" The second question, asked of those who indicate that they are tribesmen, reads, "How important is this membership to you?" The response choices provided are "not important at all," "not important," "somewhat important," and "very important." In the data analysis, I combine "not important at all" and "not important" responses into a single category.

¹⁵The fact that the "importance of tribal membership" question is only sensible for tribesmen — and was only measured for them — necessitates the use of two indicators. The first is *Tribesman*, a dummy that takes the indicator for those who self-identify as tribesmen. *Tribal Importance* is a four-category ordinal scale, with the 0-point acting as a place-holder for "not a tribesman" and positive values used only for the responses of self-identified tribesmen to the second question about tribal importance. *Tribesman* and *Tribal Importance* are, in effect, interaction terms, although they do not enter the equation in conventional form.

	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>
Intercept	-1.921	0.340***
Education	-0.312	0.296
Understand	0.162	0.324
Rural	0.476	0.233*
Electricity	0.400	0.057
Zaydi	1.833	0.225***
Tribesman	-0.239	0.403
Tribal Importance	1.127	0.483*
$\ln(L)$	-361.71	
n	688	

Table 4: Predicting the Tribal Dagger

But what matters of practical import can Yemenis infer from an individual’s decision to wear the tribal dagger? The above analysis suggests that the dagger is a practical, superficially observable indicator of tribalism. It can also be used to infer some of the ramifications of tribalism. In particular, Yemenis may use the dagger as a way to make educated guesses about each other’s views on tribal law and the degree of political influence they believe they have. To assess the utility of the dagger as a systematic predictor of these views — i.e., using the dagger as an *explanatory* variable — I measure these concepts using three related items from the survey instrument. *Tribal Law* measures on a five-point scale respondents’ assessments of the utility of tribal law as a means to resolve conflicts in Yemeni society.¹⁶ *National Influence* and *Local Influence* measure respondents’ self-assessed degree of political influence in national and local politics, respectively.¹⁷

Figure 4 presents nonparametric scatterplots of responses to *Tribal Importance* and *Tribal Law* (left) and *National Influence* and *Local Influence* (right) according to whether respondents are wearing the tribal dagger (red diamond) or not (green circle). Note that Yemenis do not observe each other’s placements on any of these scales, but only the choice to wear a dagger or not. Yet, as these scatterplots demonstrate, they appear able to infer where their peers place themselves on these grids by the dagger cue, at least roughly. Although there are some false positives evident in the leftmost graph — individuals who are not tribesmen but nonetheless wear the dagger — the large majority of dagger-wearers concentrate in the upper-right quadrant of the plot, indicating that they place importance on their tribal affiliations and are positively predisposed to tribal law. The rightmost graph is somewhat less clearcut, but dagger-wearers nonetheless appear to trend to the upper-right quadrant as well, indicating that they consider themselves influential in both national and local politics. Visual inspection thus suggests that the dagger cue is a valid way to assess peers’ attitudes and predispositions discretely and on the cheap: they are noisy signals insofar as

¹⁶The question reads, “Some people say that using tribal law to resolve conflicts is good for Yemeni society, while others say that the tribal system is hindering the spread of the rule of law. Which of these two statements do you agree with most?” Respondents receive two response choices and are asked to indicate which of the two they agree with more, and whether they agree strongly or just somewhat: 1. “Using tribal law to resolve conflicts is good for Yemeni society,” 2. “The use of tribal law is hindering the spread of the rule of law in the country.” In the analysis, I rescale responses such that higher categories correspond to more favorable assessments of tribal law.

¹⁷The two-part question, measured on a four-point scale, asks respondents, “How much influence do people like you have in:” 1. “National political affairs,” and 2. “Local political affairs.”

people will inevitably guess wrong from time to time, but valid ones insofar as the distinction between wearers and non-wearers is sufficiently systematic that these guesses are right more often than they are wrong.

To assess the degree to which the inferences drawn from visual inspection of Figure 4 are in fact supported systematically by the data, I estimate three ordered logit models designed to predict responses to *Tribal Law*, *National Influence*, and *Local Influence*, the results of which I present in Table 5. These results substantiate the intuition provided graphically by the scatterplots. In particular, *Dagger* positively predicts all three dependent variables — individuals wearing the tribal dagger have systematically more favorable views of tribal law and are systematically more likely to view themselves as influential in national and local politics. These are of course probabilistic inferences, and the estimates suggest that the signal-to-noise ratio of the dagger is highest with respect to tribal law and lowest with respect to local influence, but utilizing the dagger cue nonetheless enables Yemenis to make educated guesses about each other about matters of practical import that are more often right than wrong.

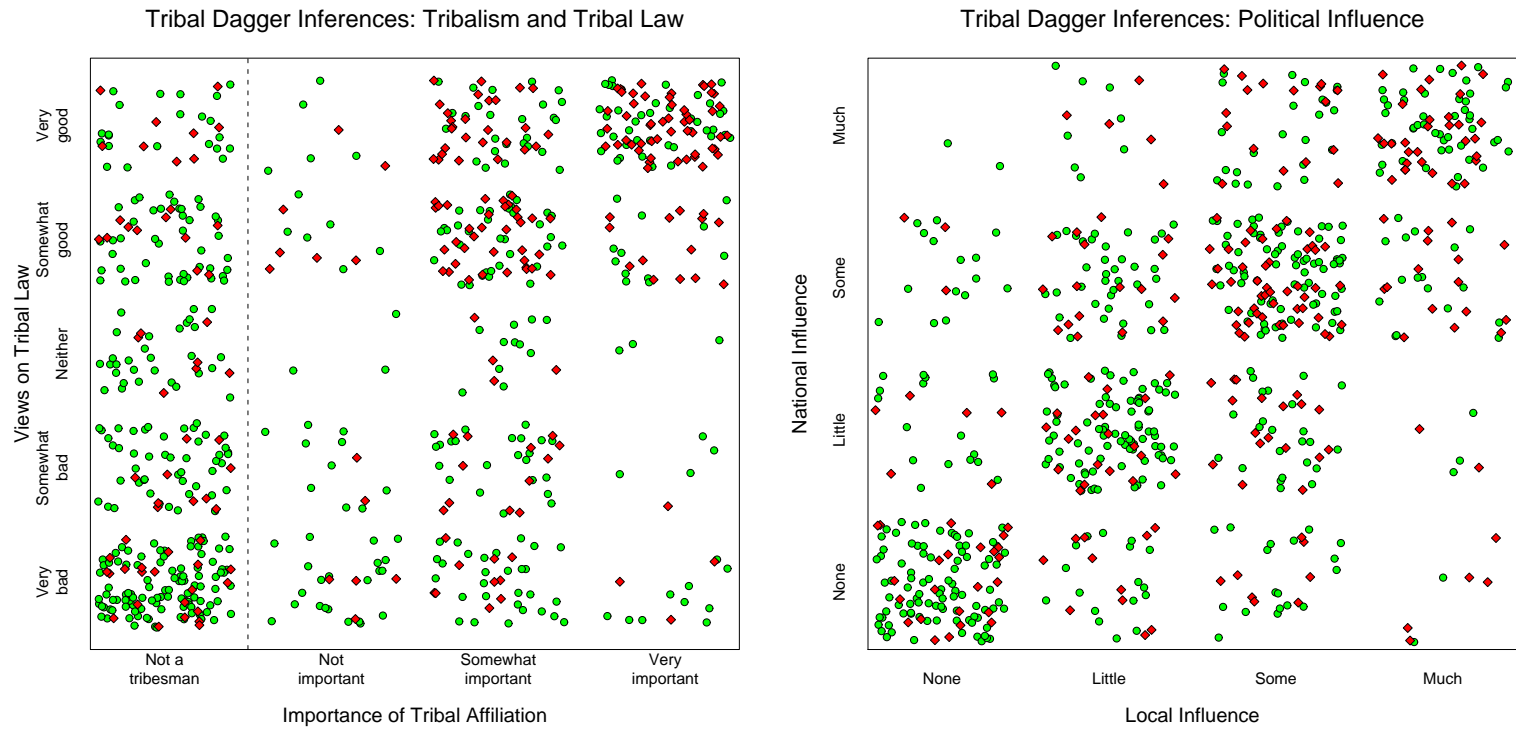


Figure 4: Tribal Dagger Scatterplots (Red: Wears a Dagger, Green: No Dagger)

	Tribal Law		National Influence		Local Influence	
	b	$se(b)^p$	b	$se(b)^p$	b	$se(b)^p$
Education	-0.824	0.223***	0.456	0.219*	0.288	0.220
Understand	0.048	0.242	0.519	0.250*	0.603	0.250*
Rural	0.573	0.168***	0.348	0.166*	-0.045	0.168
Electricity	0.104	0.044**	-0.028	0.043	-0.002	0.044
Zaydi	0.726	0.197***	0.356	0.190	0.302	0.193
Dagger	0.718	0.167***	0.642	0.168***	0.349	0.168*
A_1	-0.498	0.238*	-0.380	0.243	-0.544	0.241*
A_2	0.279	0.236	0.949	0.066***	0.555	0.071***
A_3	0.653	0.237**	2.623	0.060***	2.118	0.060***
A_4	1.803	0.246***				
$\ln(L)$	-995.05		-910.83		-927.24	
n	689		688		686	

Table 5: Predicting Perceptions of Tribal Law and Political Influence

This application thus demonstrates one plausible way to study peer-to-peer cuing dynamics systematically. By grafting unobtrusive measures onto a standard survey, we may both measure a superficially observable indicator, which is precisely what cue-takers do, and analyze them according to information gleaned from the survey interview, which is precisely the information that cue-takers *lack* but wish to infer. Rather than rely solely on difficult-to-generalize ethnographic or non-systematic anecdotal evidence, we may make valid, defensible inferences about a dynamic that is rarely the subject of systematic empirical inquiry.

3.3 Signaling to Patrons in Lebanon and Yemen

3.3.1 Theory: Ethnic Vote Monopsonies

Ethnic constituencies in diverse societies are subject to a curious combination of seemingly inconsistent empirical regularities. First, a norm of ethnic favoritism appears to be endemic, with politicians distributing state resources as patronage to members of their own communities, who in turn provide political support to their own elites. Second, the benefits distributed to mass constituents along ethnic lines are often *trivially small*. These two regularities appear difficult to reconcile: how can a dynamic of ethnic favoritism coexist with a dynamic of ethnic neglect? The resolution is in the structure of ethnic constituencies, which makes voters captive audiences: constituents vote for coethnic elites because they have no other viable options, and elites reward their coethnic constituents because their votes are cheap.

Ethnic constituencies are defined according to ascriptive, descent-like rules. In principle, membership is relatively easy to infer from a large set of observable, covarying proxies such as names, accents, and skin color, and relatively stable and coherent across time because ascription defines social categories with very low boundary permeability. By utilizing descent-based membership rules, such constituencies become societies-in-miniature (Bates 1974; Chandra 2004; Horowitz 1985) somewhat analogous to catch-all parties, but with a key difference: whereas the boundaries of catch-all parties are highly permeable, there is in principle no entry into or exit from ethnic categories (Hirschman 1970; Kirchheimer 1966; Mainwaring 1999). This lack of entry and exit options, in turn, makes mass constituents captive audiences for their coethnic elites.

Mass constituents, in other words, comprise a protected vote market for their elites. In effect, they supply subsidized political support to coethnic

politicians, who may buy constituents' votes at reduced prices because they do not face credible cross-ethnic competition for those votes — paying the reservation price to induce constituents to turn up at the polls rather than the higher competitive market rate. To the degree that politicians can act as monopsonistic buyers of their coethnics' votes, they can capture this ethnic subsidy, which represents a transfer of resources from the mass to the elite level. Government institutions, in turn, can either magnify or disrupt this dynamic by retarding or stimulating *intra*-ethnic competition between elites for their coethnics' votes. The latter environment is one of oligopsonistic competition which, although not quite the gold standard of perfect competition for votes, is preferable to monopsonistic vote-buying from the perspective of constituents. Under monopsony, constituents receive small rewards and must compete for patronage, whereas under oligopsony, politicians must compete for votes and pay out comparably larger rewards to constituents to win their support, effectively recirculating a larger portion of the ethnic subsidy to the mass level.

Yet vote-buying and targeting rewards to supporters presupposes that buyers have some way of identifying those supporters and distinguishing them from non-supporters. Transactions in the market for votes occur in an environment of asymmetric information. In particular, voters have private information about their choice and levels of political support that politicians lack. Yet politicians wish to condition their resource distribution decisions on this information so as to make politically efficient use of the scarce resources available to them by targeting those resources to supporters without wasting them on non-supporters. Because politicians do not observe vote choice — the principle if not always the practice of the secret ballot makes votes completely *unobservable* — politicians must instead find alternative means to infer the compositions of their coalitions and distinguish supporters from non-supporters. Among the options available to them, politicians may attempt to interpret, and reward-seeking constituents may choose to send, observable signals of support in an effort to separate constituent types. Given the argument that members of monopsonized constituencies must compete for patronage, we might expect that their decisions to signal support to patrons should reflect this logic.

3.3.2 Measurement: Signals Observable by Patrons

The dynamic under investigation here is a mass-elite interaction in which a constituent sends a signal and a politician receives and interprets it for the purposes of determining whether to grant a reward. This empirical appli-

cation is thus complementary to the dynamic of cuing with tribal daggers described previously, in which we wished to study a mass-mass and not mass-elite interaction. But, as before, because we wish to examine an *interaction*, we cannot study the constituent in isolation — or at least outside the context of the interaction in question — without failing to reproduce crucial components of this inherently communicative dynamic. In particular, the signaling logic described above defines a sender and a receiver, and the sender’s message is only the message of interest when its target is that receiver.

Thus, to capture the signaling dynamic, whatever we measure as the signal must be observable by the *patron*, who is the targeted audience, and not just by the survey interviewer, who is not the intended receiver. As before, this requires us to get the audience right, and the survey interviewer is not it. The interviewer, furthermore, becomes privy to information gathered over the course of the interview that the patron — the intended receiver — does not have. But for the indicator of the signal to be viable, it must actually be a signal that the target can observe, and it cannot simply be the response to a survey question on party affiliation or vote choice that the patron does not observe. As before, we are left in the quandary of identifying empirical indicators on a survey that cannot be actual *questions* on that survey.

As done previously in studying mass discourse, I graft unobstrusive measurement techniques onto a standard survey instrument by measuring respondents’ display of political posters, flags, and other paraphernalia as an indicator of signals of support for patrons. Figure 5 provides examples from both Lebanon and Yemen. The crucial aspect of such symbols, as before, is that they are publicly displayed, and hence are superficially observable by patrons and their lieutenants for the purposes of distributing patronage resources. Note that I am not attempting to claim that the display of political symbols is the *only* signal a constituent may send, but is rather one of several that presumably covary, such as attendance at rallies, showing up to work the phones, and so on. In other words, symbol displays are themselves signals, as well as indicators of the propensity to signal in other ways as well that are observable to patrons but not recorded by the survey interviewer.

The logic described above suggests that constituents from monopsonized communities must compete for patronage, whereas under oligopsonistic competition elites compete for constituents’ votes. If this is correct, then we should expect monopsonized respondents’ decisions to signal political support to reflect patronage considerations, whereas oligopsonized respondents’ decisions to display political symbols may reflect expressive considerations to a much greater degree. In other words, monopsonized respondents are



Figure 5: Political Posters (Lebanon: Prime Minister, Yemen: President)

signaling, whereas oligopsonized respondents are expressing. I now turn to empirical tests of these claims to assess their validity.

3.3.3 Empirics: Competing for Patronage

Previously, in the application to discourse analysis, I suggested that observables such as the political posters used here could be analyzed as both dependent and independent variables. Here, however, the signal itself — as indicated by the posters — is the ultimate outcome of interest rather than a means to an end. The signaling dynamic is what we wish to study empirically, and consequently analyzing the decision to send a signal is a relatively direct test of at least part of that dynamic.

In the models that follow, I split the survey samples into their respective sectarian community subsamples — Shiites, Sunnis, and Christians in Lebanon, Zaydi Shiites, Shafai Sunnis, and Other Sunnis in Yemen — because the argument outlined above suggests that qualitatively different processes will occur in monopsonized versus non-monopsonized constituencies. For different reasons not central to this empirical exercise, monopsonistic vote-buyers have emerged in the Lebanese Sunni and Yemeni Shia communities, whereas credible if imperfect electoral competition occurs in the remaining communities in either country. Hence, if the argument described above is correct, the same factor — patronage calculations — that explains

signaling decisions among Lebanese Sunnis should also explain signaling decisions among Yemeni Shiites, and should *not* explain the decisions to display posters among Lebanese Shiites and Christians or Yemeni Sunnis.

As indicators of the importance respondents place on patronage, I utilize their assessments on whether *connections* or *merit and ability* are the key criteria for obtaining a job in government (J_G) and the private sector (J_P).¹⁸ We must take care to distinguish between individuals who believe *everything* is based on connections — in which case political connections are no more valuable than any other kind — and those who see a substantial gap between the criteria for the public and private sectors, with a large gap indicating the premium on which respondents place on political connections to achieve desired outcomes. To capture this dynamic, I include an interaction term ($J_G \times J_P$) between the two connections indicators.

Tables 6 and 7 reports results of binomial logit models designed to estimate respondents' propensities to display political posters and other symbols according to a set of basic control variables and their assessments of the importance of having connections to find employment. Substantively, our interest is primarily in the coefficient estimate on J_G , the government jobs indicator. The only two communities within which we observe a positive, statistically significant relationship — where believing that connections are the key factor in getting a government job predicts the decision to display a political poster — are in fact Lebanese Sunnis and Yemeni Zaydi Shiites, which are the two monopsonized communities. No such relationship is even remotely evident among the remaining, non-monopsonized communities.

¹⁸These indicators come from two survey questions designed to separate out views on the importance of connections in the public and private sectors, with the rationale that a divergence between the two assessments indicates the premium individuals put on connections *in politics*. The first question reads, “What is the most important thing to get a good government job, as opposed to a job in the private sector? Which of these two statements do you agree with most?” and the latter reads, “How about the *private sector*? Which of these two statements do you agree with most?” Respondents receive analogous response choices and are asked to indicate which of the two they agree with more, and whether they agree strongly or just somewhat: 1. “Personal connections are the most important thing in getting a (*government* job; job in *business* or *the private sector*),” and 2. “The most important factors in getting a (*government* job; job in *business* or *the private sector*) are merit and ability.” Due to a strong skew towards connections on the government jobs question in Lebanon, I use a dichotomized version of this variable in the estimations for both Lebanese and Yemeni respondents, although utilizing the fully scaled version among Yemeni respondents does not alter the substantive results.

	Shia		Sunni		Christian	
	b	$se(b)^p$	b	$se(b)^p$	b	$se(b)^p$
Intercept	2.413	0.756**	-2.332	0.862**	-0.271	0.852
Rural	-0.382	0.511	0.080	0.375	0.784	0.427
Female	-0.064	0.320	0.307	0.348	-0.851	0.480
Education	0.188	0.910	0.857	0.709	0.601	0.944
Electricity	-0.650	0.233**	0.102	0.123	-0.615	0.243*
$\mathbf{J_G}$	0.313	0.628	2.722	0.832**	-0.315	0.531
$\mathbf{J_P}$	-2.250	0.890*	0.120	1.317	-2.654	1.530
$\mathbf{J_G} \times \mathbf{J_P}$	-0.414	1.206	-3.401	1.376*	1.751	1.599
$\ln(L)$	-131.13		-147.40		-102.53	
n	317		300		304	

Table 6: Predicting Signals by Sect, Lebanon

	Zaydi Shia		Shafai Sunni		Other Sunni	
	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>se(b)^p</i>
Intercept	-0.789	0.518	-2.669	0.420***	-1.663	0.815*
Rural	-0.445	0.364	0.781	0.300**	-0.789	0.589
Female	-0.804	0.316*	0.359	0.236	1.240	0.515*
Education	0.020	0.502	0.486	0.352	-0.315	0.739
Electricity	-0.068	0.112	-0.024	0.066	0.497	0.185**
J_G	1.255	0.427**	-0.200	0.353	-1.023	0.736
J_P	1.020	0.604	-0.293	0.431	-0.091	0.876
J_G × J_P	-1.658	0.784*	-0.027	0.566	0.325	1.248
ln(<i>L</i>)	-142.67		-295.85		-60.03	
<i>n</i>	267		836		122	

Table 7: Predicting Signals by Sect, Yemen

To aid in comprehension, especially due to the inclusion of an interaction term and the fact that the models are non-linear, I present these results graphically as first differences in Figure 6. These figures clarify and make more intuitive the findings presented in Tables 6 and 7. In particular, the only positive and statistically significant results evident are found among Lebanese Sunnis and Yemeni Zaydi Shiites, and those results are only evident among those who see a significant gap in the criteria for government and private sector jobs. The interpretation of these findings is that those who perceive such a gap are more likely to see utility in cultivating the very connections they deem to be important, and hence cultivate a political patron. Meanwhile, no such relationship is evident in the non-monopsonized communities, and patronage calculations do not appear to drive decisions to display posters and symbols in any systematic way. Members of these communities thus appear to be engaged in expressive action rather than signaling.

This empirical application demonstrates one potentially promising way to study signaling dynamics. In effect, it applies a very simple maxim: find an observable implication of the signaling relationship, an actual signal itself, and measure it directly. For reasons elucidated above, this signal could not be a survey *question* for the simple reason that answers to these questions are unobservable to the intended signal receivers and consequently cannot approximate signals. Yet, by grafting unobtrusive measurement of a public observable to a standard survey instrument, we may also gain leverage on the decision-making process that leads some respondents to make such a public display in order to determine when they are, and are not, signals.

4 Discussion

[(THUNDEROUS CONCLUSION GOES HERE.)]

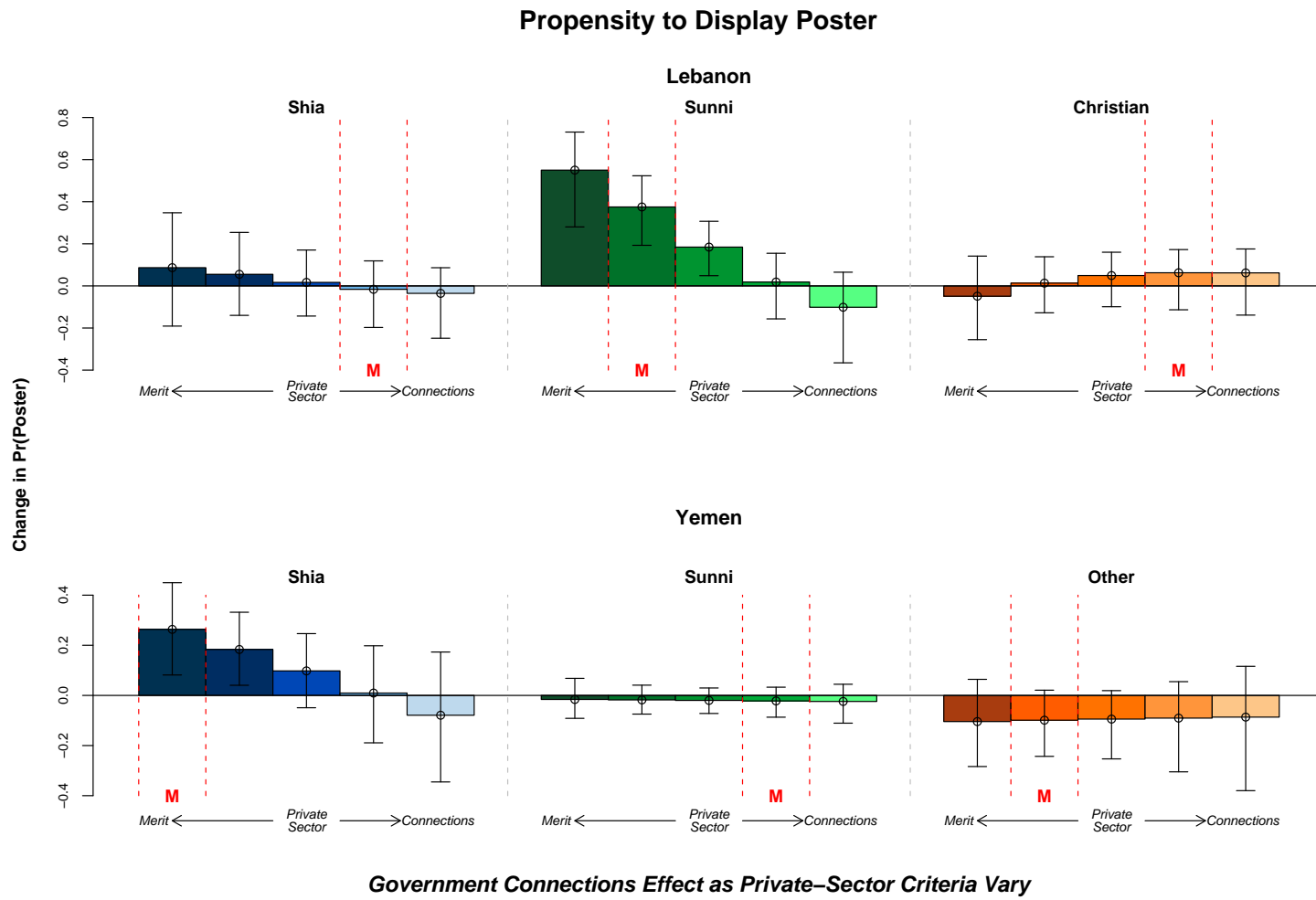


Figure 6: Signal Propensity by Connections

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